

A

Succinct History
OF
PRIESTHOOD,
ANCIENT and MODERN.

Humbly inscrib'd

To the Ever-illustrious, and most Celebrated
SECT of

FREE THINKERS.

By ALBERTO RADICATI,
Count DE PASSERAN and DE COCCONAS, a *Piemontaise*
Exile now in HOLLAND, a Christian *Free-Thinker*.

Hæc urget Lupus, hæc Canis.

H O K. Sat. 2. lib. 2.



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A Succinct



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HISTORY

OF

PRIESTHOOD;

ANCIENT and MODERN.

INTRODUCTION.

Proving, among other Matters, that our Great-Grand-Mother Eve was a Free-Thinker.



NOTWITHSTANDING diverse *Treatises* have been published, since the glorious *Revolution* which happened in *Great-Britain*, under the Reign of King *James II*, to expose the Clergy's Usurpations, and to spread abroad the Opinions of *Free-Thinkers*, yet there has not appeared any Author who has undertaken to give us a regular and impartial *History* of the Disputes between the Contending

B

Parties ;

Parties; that is to say, between the Partisans of *Human Reason*, and the Sticklers for the *Sacerdotal Profession*, or *Priesthood*: Tho', as shall be proved in the Sequel of this *Discourse*, the Difference of their Principles was, and is, the true and only Cause of all those Divisions which have been so long reigning among Men, and of those Distinctions for which the several *Sects* are, to this very Day, furiously contesting.

THE *Term* of *Free-Thinking* seems to be *new*, tho' the *Thing* is, perhaps, as *old* as the World itself; and a very knowing Writer of our Party would infallibly have succeeded better, had he advanced, That the *Freedom of Thinking*, and not *Christianity* *, had been as *old* as the *Creation*: For, I can very readily prove it so to be.

EVE †, that original Mother of Mankind, did she not *think freely*, when, at the *Serpent's* Persuasion, she eat the Apple? The Truth is, I agree, that *Eve* would have done abundantly better, had she never meddled with it; because, then she would not have incurred any Chastisement: But it does not, however, appear, that the Almighty censured her for making *free* Use of her Reason, tho' that *free* Liberty was the fatal Cause of her Disobedience. Thus *Eve*, who (according to *Moses*) was the *Mother* of all *Flesh*, was also *Mother* to the *Free-Thinkers*.

HAVING here shewed the Origin of our Admirable Sect, I must acquaint the Reader, that

* See *Tindal's* CHRISTIANITY as Old as the CREATION.

† It must be noted, that *Free-Thinkers* admit all Scripture Passages which seem to favour their Opinion.

my Intention was next to have given a Definition of our Faith, with a short System of our Doctrine, and from thence to have passed on to a Recital of the *Sacerdotal Profession, Priesthood, or Priestcraft*: But, having casually opened my Mind to a certain Friend, who had long meditated on these important Matters, he communicated to me his Sentiments in Writing; and, notwithstanding the Errors of Education had, as may be observed, made a strong Impression upon his Mind, nevertheless, as there is something very curious in his Manner of Conclusion, I dare say, that his Argument will not displease the Reader.



CH A P. I.

A curious Letter to the Author, shewing the true Origin of the Free-Thinking SECT; the vile Practises of Priests, with a thorough Examination of the several pretended Revelations.

“  ELIGION, or the *Action* of *adoring*
 “ SUPREME POWER (says this Friend
 “ of mine) is so natural a Consequence
 “ of *believing* in *one*, and such *Belief*
 “ is so conformable to our Reason, that we see
 “ not any Nation so savage, nor People so barbarous, as not, in some Sense, to have acknowledged a *Divinity*, and consequently, to have
 “ payed

“ payed Adoration thereto. When, by a deplo-
 “ rable Effect of Mens Corruption and Ignorance,
 “ all Knowledge of the *True* GOD became sophis-
 “ ticated, fundry new and ridiculous Notions took
 “ Birth, and have prevailed : For, the People
 “ denoting and observing the Beauty and regular
 “ Motions of the Planets, together with that ap-
 “ parent Influence which they have upon Sublu-
 “ nary Bodies, did thence infer, that those Ce-
 “ lestial Orbs were Beings of a super-excellent
 “ Nature, whereby all Things below were abso-
 “ lutely governed and directed. They looked
 “ on them therefore as Deities ; and adored them ;
 “ and as the *Cause* of this Kind of Idolatry was
 “ spread every where, the *Practise* of it was al-
 “ so universal.

“ The principal Dogmas of the *Egyptians* con-
 “ sisted in the superstitious Worship which they
 “ gave to *Isis*, *Osiris*, *Serapis*, and some other fa-
 “ bulous Divinities, whereof the Names and Fa-
 “ bles are partly transmitted down to us by *He-*
 “ *rodotus* *, *Diodorus Siculus* †, and *Plutarch* ||.
 “ Besides these, they likewise worshiped Animals,
 “ even some of the vilest and most contemptible,
 “ nay withal diverse of the Plants, &c. which
 “ grew in their Country. This Superstition was
 “ chiefly grounded on the *Metempsychosis*, or Trans-
 “ migration of the Soul ; and this Opinion got
 “ also great Footing in *Europe*, after *Pythagoras*
 “ has learned it in *Egypt*.

* Histor. lib. 2.

† Biblioth. Hist. lib. 2.

|| In his *Treatise* of *Isis* and *Osiris*.

“ PRINCES,

“ Princes, who were the Founders of mighty
 “ Empires, such as *Nimrod* *, were first by their
 “ Successors held in Veneration, and then adored
 “ by the Subjects. Families made Tutelar Gods
 “ of the worthiest Men among their Ancestors †.
 “ Fear has likewise greatly contributed towards
 “ the Creation of Divinities; since we see that
 “ *War, Pestilence, Sickness*, with other terrible
 “ Accidents, have taken place among the Num-
 “ ber of Celestial Powers. Such Adoration did
 “ very naturally introduce a Priesthood: And as
 “ Impressions of Religion always make Men do-
 “ cile and obedient, Policy had a very conside-
 “ rable Share in Ecclesiastical Institutions, and
 “ forged Revelations commonly served for In-
 “ troductions to the Establishment of Laws.
 “ In a Word, what has often been remarked con-
 “ cerning the Potentates of the remotest Times,
 “ who united the Crown and Miter, is a strong
 “ Proof of their making this Use of Religion;
 “ knowing how easily and readily People submit
 “ to what is taken to be the Ordinance of Inspi-
 “ ration; whereas there would be great Difficulty
 “ in bringing them to obey those very Ordinan-
 “ ces, did they believe them to be of mere hu-
 “ man Invention.

“ With these Motives, *Minos* gave out to the
 “ *Cretans*, that he went down, from Time to Time,
 “ into *Jupiter's* Cave, there to receive his Pre-
 “ cepts, and afterwards to instruct Mankind.
 “ His Imitator *Lycurgus* did the like: For he

* He was worshiped under the Name of *Belus*.

† See *Weemse*, of the *four Degenerate Sons*; p. 165. and *Grotius*
De Verit. Christ. Relig. lib. 4.

“ boasted,

“ boasted, that he had received the Laws,
 “ which he established among the *Lacedemonians*,
 “ from the Prophetess *Pythia*, in those repeated
 “ Voyages which he made to *Delphos*. *Amphi-*
 “ *araus*, *Trophonius*, *Orpheus* and *Musæus*, had
 “ likewise Recourse to the same Expedients.
 “ *Zamolxis Pythagoreus* used them with the *Getæ*,
 “ *Achaïcarus* with the *Bosphorans*; the *Gymnoso-*
 “ *phists* employed the like Artifice with the Ori-
 “ ental *Indians*; the *Magi*, and those who were
 “ stiled the *Necromances* *, the *Lecanomances* †,
 “ and the *Hydromances* ||, acted the same with
 “ the *Persians*, *Affyrians* and *Chaldeans* **. And
 “ finally, *Numa*, pretending to hold Conferences
 “ with the Nymph *Egyria*, found Means to in-
 “ troduce among the *Romans* a Religion, Cere-
 “ monies, with a Priesthood, and thereby to re-
 “ duce a fierce warlike Nation to live peaceably
 “ under the Constraint of Laws ††.

“ But such a good Use has not been always
 “ made of this Expedient: *Mohammed*, for In-
 “ stance, under Pretext of frequent Interviews
 “ with the Arch-Angel *Gabriel*, brought in

* *Necromancy* is a Divination by dead Corpses, which is made when any Tokens are observed on a Corpse giving Room for some Prediction.

† *Lecanomancy*, a Sort of Witchcraft made with a great Cauldron full of Water, on the Bottom whereof it was believed that Dæmons were wont to dance, &c.

|| *Hydromancy*, or Divination by Water, was made when it was imagined that something particular was seen in the Water. There were likewise *Piromancy*, *Æromancy*, *Sciromancy*, *Geomancy* and *Chiro-mancy*, among the *Greeks*: concerning all which see what is particularised by the learned *Balth. Bekker*, in his *Monde Enchanté*, lib. 1. cap. 3.

** See *Strabo*: *Rerum Geograph.* lib. 16.

†† See *Tit. Liv.* and *Plutarch*, in *Numa*.

“ among

“ among the *Arabians*, a new Religion, very pure
 “ indeed, as to its Rites and Practise, but
 “ which so flattered and indulged the Passions and
 “ Senses, that many of the Eastern People were
 “ glad to embrace it; and by so much the more
 “ readily, as that pretended Prophet spread it
 “ abroad, Inquisitor-like, Sword in Hand*.

“ SUCH being the Source of these pretended
 “ Revelations, what are we to expect from those
 “ Men destined for the Propagation thereof, but
 “ Frauds and Impositions of a like Strain? With
 “ those of a very remote Antiquity, Religion did
 “ not serve as an Instrument of Politics (as had
 “ been practised of latter Days) because of the mean
 “ Condition of its Ministers; but it was really in-
 “ stituted to that very End and Purpose†. For
 “ this Reason it was, that the *Romans* were sedu-
 “ lously careful to preserve these Orders of Priests
 “ which were properest to have Influence over
 “ Peoples Minds, and to produce such Effects as
 “ they desired. From the Body of the *Patrici-*
 “ *ans* it was they drew the *Augurs* and *Pontifs*,
 “ who, being always united to the Senate, were
 “ extremely useful and necessary to the State||;
 “ I mean the Government: For they attracted
 “ the Peoples Veneration, not so much on Account
 “ of their Birth, as by their particular Manner
 “ of Life, and thro’ the wonderful good Opinion
 “ they had of them, imagining them to be Inter-
 “ preters to their Gods, because of the Divination
 “ by them professed.

* See *Aboul-Feda*, *Jallaloddin*, *Al-Beidauvi*, &c.

† See *Pomp. Lætus*, cap. *De Augur*.

|| See *Plutarch*.

“ WE may withal conjecture, that the famous
 “ Oracles of *Greece* served likewise for the same
 “ Design*, by the Sarcasm made upon them,
 “ affirming, *That they were assisted in their Di-*
 “ *vinations by King Philip of Macedon's Gold:*
 “ And notwithstanding the Oracles Answers were
 “ always communicated to the People with abun-
 “ dance of Pomp and Solemnity, as public Sacri-
 “ fices, Games, and Processions, yet all this made
 “ Impressions only on the weak Understandings
 “ of the Populace, which always fasten more on
 “ the glaring Appearances of Things than on their
 “ Reality; but the Illusion carried no Weight
 “ with Men whose Fund of solid Sense inabled
 “ them to see into these mysterious Pageantries.
 “ Those Persons, I say, who had attained the
 “ Knowledge of the OMNIPOTENT, by contem-
 “ plating his Works in the marvellous Construc-
 “ tion of the Universe, and by meditating on the
 “ continual Proofs they had of his infinite Wis-
 “ dom, his boundless Power, and of his general
 “ Providence; these, I say again, ought necessa-
 “ rily to conceive far juster and more elevated I-
 “ deas of that SUPREME BEING, and consequent-
 “ ly to see the Absurdity and Impiety of that
 “ ridiculous Worship which was offered him.
 “ What had then those Sages to do amidst so su-
 “ perstitious a Populace? How could they pro-
 “ ceed? They were forced to shew Respect and
 “ Veneration for the Religion of their Country,
 “ and to conceal their Sentiments, or at least to
 “ communicate them to those Idolaters in Terms

* See *Ant. van Dale's Hist. of Oracles*, *M. de Fontanelle* trans-
 lated it into *French*.

“ equivocal

“ equivocal and obscure, as most Philosophers
 “ have done, to avoid exposing themselves to the
 “ furious Zeal of Bigots; otherwise they must
 “ have Recourse to the Use of Reason and Argu-
 “ ments openly to defend their Opinions, which
 “ is often dangerous to attempt, under any Go-
 “ vernment whatsoever; the established Religion
 “ being so necessary, and consequently so sacred
 “ to the State, that the least Offer against it is
 “ looked on a Crime of High-Treason, Divine
 “ and Human. *Socrates* was deprived of his Life,
 “ for decrying those vulgar Divinities*; and *A-*
 “ *ristotle*†, on a bare Surmise of his not being
 “ Orthodox, was persecuted, and constrained to
 “ flee from *Athens*.

“ A MODERN Author||, highly admired by those
 “ of his Party, has placed *Socrates*, with several
 “ other Great Men, as well *Greeks* as *Romans*,
 “ among the Number of *Free-Thinkers*; and, to
 “ speak my Mind frankly, it seems to me, so far
 “ as I am capable of comprehending the Princi-
 “ ples of the Sect, that in one Sense he is not
 “ mistaken: For, in Effect, the real Beginning of
 “ the Sect should be this, *viz.* — Some of the
 “ *Pagan* Mysteries were so very monstrous, others
 “ so stupidly ridiculous, and the Conduct of their
 “ Priests in general so scandalous, that it was no
 “ great Difficulty for Men of Discernment to dis-
 “ cover the Characters of Policy and Human
 “ Frailty in these supposed Revelations, from the
 “ infamous Uses which were made of them. The

* See *Diog. Laert.* in his Life of *Socrates*.

† See *P. Rapin* in his *Comparison* between *Plato* and *Aristotle*.

|| *Ant. Collins*.

“ *Pagans* thus being in so miserable a Condition,
 “ because of their Ignorance, the wisest Men *
 “ among them looked on all these Divinities of
 “ theirs as a whimsical Production of Human Wit
 “ and Invention, and laughed at the Rapes com-
 “ mitted by *Jupiter*, the Adulteries of *Venus*, the
 “ Thefts of *Mercury*, &c. and began at length to
 “ abominate the Holy-Days, with the impious,
 “ cruel, shameless, obscene and ridiculous Cere-
 “ monies which had been instituted in Honor of
 “ those false Deities. Thus far it is certain, that
 “ the Procedure and Sentiments of those Sages were
 “ laudable; but we must needs blame them for
 “ taking the Steps they did after being freed from
 “ those vulgar Errors: For, proud of their having
 “ shaken off the Yoke of Superstition †, and puffed
 “ up with their superior Knowledge, each of them
 “ was for establishing his own particular Opinions,
 “ as so many unerring Oracles in the World; and,
 “ without perceiving that they were full as gross
 “ and faulty, as contradictory to Reason as those
 “ which they had decried, they taught, That the
 “ Universe was no other than a fortuitous Con-
 “ course of Atoms: That, if any Gods did exist
 “ at all, they resided in some unknown Places,
 “ and in a perpetual Inaction, leaving the Direc-
 “ tion and Government of the World merely to
 “ Chance, and to second Causes||: That the Ge-

* As *Diogenes*, *Democritus*, *Epicurus*, *Plato*, *Socrates*, *Aristotle*, &c.

† See *Lucret.* and *Lucian.*

|| *Plato* gave the Name of *Ideas* to the Principles which flowed from the Divine Nature, which subsisted therewith, and whereby all Things do subsist; each of them being a sort of Image of that from whence they all do proceed; insomuch that they partake of the Nature of their Original, and like unto the Principle from whence themselves do flow.

“neration of one Thing was formed from the
 “Corruption of another: That true Wisdom con-
 “sisted in knowing how to make good Use and
 “Advantage of our Time while we lived, because
 “the After-being was a mere Uncertainty; And,
 “finally, That Man’s supreme Felicity was no
 “other than to enjoy as much Pleasure as he
 “could every Day, since he was not sure of survi-
 “ving till the Morrow*.

“You perceive, Sir, by what I have been ad-
 “vancing, that the *Free-Thinkers* of Antiquity,
 “differed not in Principles from our Modern *Free-
 “Thinkers*, and that consequently Mr. *Collins* was
 “not in the Wrong to argue, That the Great
 “Men of our Days have succeeded those Heroes
 “of the most distant Ages, and have inherited
 “their irradicable Aversion to Revelation and
 “the Priesthood; with this Difference, that the
 “*Free-Thinkers* of Antiquity had all imaginable
 “Reason to exclaim against the superstitious Wor-
 “ship of their Times, a Worship which autho-
 “rised the most enormous Vices; whereas the
 “Moderns † blaspheme a Religion truly Divine,
 “which leads Mankind to Goodness and Virtue,
 “and which was instituted among them, to no
 “other End than to render them completely
 “happy.

“I wish I could also say, in order that you
 “Gentlemen *Free-Thinkers* might be wholly in-
 “excusable, That all the pious Frauds and Ar-
 “tifices which were used by the *Pagan* Priests to
 “enrich themselves (tho’ they made Shew of con-

* See *Lucret. Anacr.* and also *Horace*, in some of his *Odes*.

† See the *Fable* of the *Bees*; The *Oracle* of *Reason*, &c.

“temning all worldly Grandure) were absolutely
 “unknown to our Gospel-Ministers. But alas!
 “my Wishes are fruitless: The Apostles are no
 “more; Miracles are ceased, and Religion is no
 “longer governed by a peculiar Providence; but
 “its Destiny seems to be in the Hands of those
 “who have the Administration thereof: Thus
 “may the *Christian* Administrators, by a Con-
 “duct exemplary, or scandalous; by a Doctrine
 “good, or bad, either maintain and support, or
 “ruin and subvert, *Christianity*. We live in
 “Times wherein Deeds are more regarded than
 “Words, and wherein People judge of the Me-
 “rits of a Belief, no otherwise than by the Morals
 “and Deportment of its Professors.”

I shall hereafter have Occasion of communi-
 cating to my Readers the Sequel of this Letter,
 which carries not with it less Solidity and Impor-
 tance. True, my Friend's grave Style is some-
 what tiresome; but we must nevertheless acknow-
 ledge, that he argues not altogether amiss, for one
 whose Understanding is not illuminated like those
 of our *Free-Thinkers*. In the Interim, I shall
 make appear, how dangerous it is to carry Reli-
 gious Disputes too far, as is the Clergy's general
 Practise.

C H A P. II.

How the good and laudable Designs of establishing Religions in the World, are lamentably frustrated by the Priest's Ill-Performance of their Sacerdotal Functions.

WHEN we consider the Desolations of so many flourishing Regions, the, in a Manner, numberless Multitudes of People destroyed already, with the Torrents of human Gore which are yet hourly let run, and all this merely on the Score of Religion, what Ideas are we able to conceive of that Source, what Opinion can we have of the Principle, from whence have proceeded, and still are proceeding, such Inundations of terrible Mischiefs! When we read of those cruel Sacrifices offered by the *Pagans* to their Gods, without excepting those of their own Species, nay, not sparing even the Fair Sex, nor the innocent Lives of tender Infants: When we reflect on the horrible Massacres of the *Benjamites**; of the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*; that at *Paris*, on *S. Bartholomy's Day*, and that in *Ireland*†: When we call to Mind the unheard of Inhumanities exercised by the *Inquisitors* upon those they deem *Heretics*, as also the furious Persecutions which the differing *Sects* of *Christians* carry on among themselves; on considering all this, I say, with what Indignation may we not cry out?

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum!

* The whole Tribe was miserably slaughtered, Man, Woman and Child, almost to its utter Extermination, thro' the Instigation of a *Levite*, or *Jewish Priest*, whose Concubine some Debauchees of that Tribe had abused.

† For all these Facts, see a Pamphlet lately published by *R. Montagu*.

MEAN while, if we examine into the Fundamentals of Religion, whether Natural or Revealed, or of its Accomplishment by the Ministry of *Jesus Christ*, we shall not, in those Laws, meet with any Thing tending to the Destruction of Human-kind, but on the contrary to Peace, to the Preservation of Society, and to the multiplying of whatever may render the Course of Peoples Lives innocent and commodious. To what are we then to attribute these Evils which History and Experience shew us flowing along with the Current of Religion? To the Priests, most certainly. They have always been allowed great Revenues, to the End that they might support their Rank decently, and do Honor to the Religion they serve: But they have been far from making such good Use of those Allowances. No, they have employed them, together with all the Credit which their Function and Character gave them, to gain Authority in Temporal Affairs, and afterwards to seize the Sovereign Power; as did the *Magi* in *Persia*, who, on the Death of King *Cambyse**, advanced one of their own Members to the Throne; or else, to render themselves necessary to a prevailing Party, by prostituting their Sacerdotal Dignity and Profession, in order to partake of their Conquests. All this is what evidently appears in the *Greek* and *Latin* Histories, yet still more so in those of a fresher Date.

THE End to which Religion, and consequently Priests, were established in all Nations, was undoubtedly to polish Peoples Understandings,

* See *Herodotus*, Hist. lib. 3.

and,

and, thro' the Dread of some Deity, to restrain them from abandoning themselves to the Impulses of their inordinate Passions, and bring them to give exterior Marks of their Acknowledgment towards the Supreme BEING, thro' whose Bignity they naturally found that they did subsist.

Now the Priests, instead of supporting a Design so extremely salutary to Mankind, and so very glorious and honorable to the Sacerdotal Order (since, if they had supported it well, and as they ought to have done, they would have been every where venerated unfeignedly, as public Benefactors) have, contrariwise, continually applied themselves to the forging of ridiculous Fables, abusing therewith the Credulity of ignorant People, and extending their own Power.

RELIGION they have made to consist of mad, foolish, and frequently of inhumane Sacrifices; to preach Things inconceivable; in bedecking Temples with Ornaments no less pompous than useless; and in making childish, nay, scandalous Processions; leaving the very Essential of their Duty (*viz.* the Charge of instructing the People in Matters of true Faith and Morality) to Philosophers, or else to a few Underlings, not yet initiated in the Mysteries of Sacerdotal Politics, whereof they were as utterly ignorant as of the real Duties of Religion.

WHOEVER runs over the Beginning of the celebrated *M. de Barbeirac's* Preface to *Puffendorf's* learned Book, *De Jure NATURÆ & GENTIUM* *, will there find all I have been advancing

* See the *French* Translation of that fine *Treatise*.

very sufficiently proved: And I flatter myself, that the subsequent *Chapters* will convince every intelligent and unbiaſſed Reader of my Integrity, and that what I ſay in this *Treatiſe*, relating to the Sacerdotal Profeſſion, or Prieſthood, is but too well grounded. — As to the reſt, I ſolemnly declare, before the Great Judge of Hearts, That I do not here mean to decry Prieſts in general, but only thoſe horrible Abuſes which have creeped into the Eccleſiaſtical Body; for none can have more Veneration than myſelf for thoſe who worthily acquit themſelves of the Prieſtly Functions.

HAVING made this ſincere Declaration, I hope, without offending Orthodoxy, I may be permitted to give *Socrates* a Place in the *Free-Thinkers* Martyrology; and to place *Cicero*, *Pliny*, with diverſe other great Men of Antiquity, in the Rank of Confefſors of our illuſtrious Sect? And as for the immortal *Cato*, I am humbly of Opinion, That, was it only for that very wiſe Saying of his, “ I wonder how two *Augurs* forbear laughing when they meet,” he merits to be ranged among the ſcanty Number of glorious Heroes who eſpouſed the Cauſe of Truth and Liberty, againſt the prevailing Spirit of Enthuſiaſm.

IN order that my Readers might be inabled to form a juſt Idea of the Conduct of theſe Holy Bigots, theſe Pious Cheats, I have had the Patience to rummage among Heaps of muſty old Records *, from whence I have made ſome ſhort Extracts of what concerns the Sacerdotal Profeſſion, *Pagan*, *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian*, begining

* See *Archælogia Attica*, with its *Supplement*, and many others, whereof Mention is made hereafter.

with those so renowned Nations the *Greeks* and *Romans*, passing from them to the less-known *Oriental*s, and concluding with *England*.

C H A P. III.

Remarks on the Priesthood among the Greeks, wherein it is fully proved, that the strange Superstition of that learned and polite People was absolutely the Ruin of Athens.

ACCORDING to the Order of Time, I ought first to treat of *Egypt*, that grand Source of ancient Superstitions, of all Errors and Idolatries : But, it being my Intention, to handle that Subject largely in another Performance, I shall commence with *Greece*, or rather, with *Athens* ; for, considering the many Fooleries and Religious Extravagancies introduced there by the Administrators of Things Sacred, it seems to me very reasonable, that I should give that Place the Preference before all others.

THE Inhabitants of that famous City were, perhaps, the most civilised People the World ever saw. Among them, all the Liberal Arts and Sciences flourished exceedingly, and the *Athenians* were to all other Nations scarce-imitable Examples of Valour and Virtue : Notwithstanding all which, they could not avoid receiving and entertaining most monstrously ridiculous Opinions concerning the DEITY. Now if these knowing, these polished People, I say, could fall into horrible Idolatry, if their Understandings could be sullied and contaminated with Ideas no less foolish

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than

than superstitious, by the Artifice of their knavish Priests, ought we to wonder if we now see in the World Errors altogether as gross and as impious, which are yet abundantly better authorised than those of the *Greeks*? When we reflect, then, on the Absurdity of the *Athenians* Opinions and Worship, we cannot easily persuade ourselves, that they were the same Men, who, for their Prudence, their Valour and their Knowledge, were the Admiration of the whole Universe: Nevertheless their Priests, among other yet more unaccountable Impieties, found Means to make them believe, that they must necessarily pay Divine Honors to the *Sun*, and even inflict the Penalty of Death on such as refused*.

THIS Worship, tho' impious, was however in some Measure excusable, since the Object of their Adoration is the most glorious of all visible created Beings. But what shall we say to excuse them for their Deifying *Bread*†; their erecting Temples to the *Passions*, and adoring them? Nay, more yet; did not *Epimenides* consecrate a splendid Altar to *Impudence*? Even *Necessity*, and her *Fatal Sisters*, were ranged among the *Divinities* of the *Athenians*. In short, those Priests, not satisfied with bringing over that credulous People to adore all the Descendants of those *Pagan Gods*, whom *Homer* makes amount to the Number of three Thousand, but they likewise obliged them to set up a new Altar to the *Unknown God*, and rendered the wise *Athenians* so excessively superstitious, that they were ready

* See *Plutarch*, in *Pericles*.

† So *Clem. Alexandrin.* interprets the Word *Ceres*.

disposed to embrace all the *Beliefs* whereof they heard but the least Mention: Insomuch, that when *Paul* preached to them *Jesus* and the *Resurrection**, they took this latter for a *Divinity*.

THEIR *Divine Service* was no less extravagant than their *Creed*: For having sacrificed Part of the Victim, they devoured the Remainder, and in the Midst of this vain and riotous Festivity, they gave horrible Shouts and Outcries, getting most swinishly drunk with very exemplary Devotion. Their Oracles, or Divine Responses to what they inquired after, were frequently scrutinised, contemned and detested, not only by *Christians*, but also by *Pagans* †, even while the Matters were fresh and new, and might have been justified, had Truth been on the Priests Side, or had they been artful enough to have destroyed those Accusations. But to evidence how pernicious these *Pious Frauds* of Priests are to a State, which suffers and countenances them, I need only produce the Example of *Alcibiades*||, whose Disgrace proved so very fatal to his Country.

THIS was a noble young *Athenian*, of very extraordinary Hopes, of equal Abilities both in the Field and Cabinet. The *Athenians*, being come to a Resolution of invading *Sicily*, nominated him for one of their Generals in this Expedition. *Alcibiades* had some very powerful Enemies, who wanted to get him from Home, in order the easier to work his Destruction; but he was so extremely beloved by the People, that all

* See *Acts*, c. 17. and *Justin. Martyr*.

† By *Demosthenes*, among others, when he said, The Oracles *Philipised*.

|| See *Plutarch* in *Alcibiades*.

their Endeavors proved long fruitless: Nevertheless they yet flattered themselves that they should at length be able to attain their Ends, and their only Resource was the superstitious Humour and Disposition of the Populace. They therefore so contrived Matters, as to get him accused of having ridiculed certain Religious Mysteries, and profaned the Rites of their Goddesses *Ceres* and *Proserpina*; and, in order that this Accusation might make the greater Noise, and have the surer Effect, they by Night mutilated and defaced the Statues of *Mercury*, which were set up in some Streets of that City, and likewise charged *Alcibiades* with this sacrilegious Impiety. This Plot had its wished for Success. The enraged Populace vomited out dreadful Execrations against that Great Man; who, conscious of his own Innocence, demanded he might immediately be brought to a Trial: But this was strongly opposed by his Adversaries, who urged, That the Public Welfare and Safety required he should instantly be sent away with the Fleet, and his Trial and Sentence postponed till his Return.

THIS Proposition being approved, *Alcibiades* was constrained to submit, and so departed; which was just what his Enemies desired: For he being gone to *Sicily*, they were indefatigable in imbittering Peoples Minds against him, and made a terrible Bellowing about the pretended Mockeries, Profanations and Sacrileges whereof he had been accused. Many Persons (as generally happens in Cases of that Nature) were involved in his Disgrace; and notwithstanding the Witnesses whom the Conspirators produced to prove those
Persons

Persons to have been Accomplices with *Alcibiades* in his Sacrilege, were manifestly found guilty of most notorious Perjury (affirming, that by the Help of Moon-Light, they saw and knew the Faces of those who mutilated the said Statues, it being universally known that the Night wherein that happened was notably dark and cloudy) nevertheless so furious was the Peoples Zeal, that several innocent Mens Blood was shed before it could be calmed, and poor *Alcibiades* (whose Lot was that of all Favorites of a Populace) was the less regarded for being absent, and was, besides these imaginary Profanations and Sacrileges, loaded with the Charge of having conspired against the State.

THESE specious Pretexts wrought such Effects on the superstitious Minds of the *Athenians*, that they immediately dispatched away a Galley to bring him back to *Greece*, in order to receive his Sentence: But that brave Man, being wiser than his Adversaries took him to be, avoided falling into their Clutches: Whereupon, without having Opportunity to make any Defense, he was condemned to die, and his whole Estate to be confiscated. When these Tidings came to his Ears, he said to a Friend; “ Tho’ the People of *Athens* have sentenced me to Death, I “ will make them know that I am still alive *.” Accordingly *Alcibiades* forthwith sided with his Country’s Enemies, and from that Moment breathed nothing but Vengeance.

IT is most certain that one could not herein justify his Conduct in any Manner, had not the

¶ *Plutarch, ubi supra.*

Athenians pushed Matters to the utmost Extremity : For, after their having thus passed on him Sentence of Death and Confiscation of Goods, as we have observed, they withal injoined every one of their He and She Priests, to excommunicate him publicly, and to spew out against him a thousand execrable Imprecations ; all which was most punctually put in Execution by those pious Souls, except one Priestess, who, entertaining better Sentiments and Ideas of Religion, absolutely refused to do any Thing like it, alleging, “ That the “ Obligation of her Function was, to bestow up- “ on People Benedictions, and not Curses*.”

WE have here seen to what Lengths a Faction may carry Things, by abusing Religion, and making it a Stalking-Horse ; let us now examine into the bad Consequences of such a Procedure. *Alcibiades*, after the Injustice which had been done him, brought upon the *Athenians* such Inundations of Calamities, that they were therewith quite overwhelmed ; and their Nobility, making Advantage of the Occasion, usurped the whole Authority of that Republic ; when this Hero, seeing his Country in a Manner desolate, being reduced to its ultimate Crisis, was moved with a noble Compassion, and so well interested himself in its Favor, that he rendered it once again flourishing.

THEN it was that one might have beheld the Volubility of that People : The Sentence pronounced against *Alcibiades* was reversed ; and the Priests, who are evermore for siding with the strongest Party, failed not to absolve him from

* Idem, ibidem.

the Excommunication, by throwing into the Sea all the Writings which contained those solemn Maledictions wherewith he stood anathematized: But what is withal singular enough, is, that the Grand Pontif, or High-Priest, who made not a May-Game of the *Gods*, like the Rest of his Sacerdotal Crew, would not, on any Terms, consent to this Absolution. A remarkable High-Priest indeed!

HOWEVER the old Leven was not long before it began to ferment afresh. Scarce was *Alciades* under Sail, in order to his Return, but the Populace, irritated on Account of something which occurred to one of his Officers, condemned our Hero to Death a second Time: And this proved the immediate Cause of the *Athenians* utter Ruin, and even of that celebrated City's being reduced by the *Lacedemonians*, who there established that Form of Government which became so famous, under Title of the Thirty Tyrants.

SUCH are the dire Effects of Superstition, and of the Artifice of Priests! It is but too frequently that they bring about Revolutions, which would not easily happen were they not fomented by either the Ambition or the Avarice of Priests, or by both jointly. The unhappy Fate of that powerful Nation does then evidently prove to us, the most flourishing State on Earth may easily be put into Agitation, and turned topsy-turvy, if its Subjects are superstitious, or, are so foolish as to be Priest-rid.

C H A P. IV.

Remarks on the Priesthood among the Romans:
Of their Augurs, Pontifs, &c.

THE Virtues of the old *Romans* were so many and so very conspicuously shining, that it would be quite superfluous for me here to enter on a farther Detail: Nevertheless they have not been exempt from Superstition, even from their very Origin. Their Founder *Romulus* was himself of that Order whom they named *Augurs**; and, after the Example of those primitive Legislators of the *Greeks*, he gave himself out to his Followers for a Person inspired, who could foretel what was to come, or dive into the Decrees of Destiny: A most excellent Method for either founding or subverting a State. However, by his tragical Catastrophe, we are shewn how fatal to him was that pretended Science: For, having arrogated to himself a despotic and supreme Power, in Prejudice of the Patricians or Senators, they seized on him in the Council-Chamber, first dispatched, and then hacked him Piece-meal, each of them bearing away a Collop under his Robe or Garment: And, to conceal this horrible Paricide from the People, who already murmured at this sudden Disappearance of their Prince and Sovereign; they bribed a certain Priest, whose Name was *Proclus*, to swear point-blank, “ That, in a “ Vision, he saw King *Romulus*, who enjoined him “ to acquaint the *Roman* People with his late

* See *Tit. Liv.* and *Plutarch*, in *Romulus*.

“ Ascension

“ Ascension and his Divinity, and that, from
 “ thence-forwards, it was his Pleasure, the *Romans*, his Subjects, should worship him, by the
 “ Name of *Quirinus*.

OF *Numa*, and his Institutions, sufficient Mention has been already made, in my *Introduction*, and therefore I omit saying any more on that Head, to avoid Repetitions: But we must take Notice, that the Colleges of the *Augurs**, and the *Pontiffs*†, enjoyed certain Privileges and Immunities, which plainly enough give us to understand what was the Drift of the Sacerdotal Profession among the *Romans*. The most atrocious Crimes could never expunge the *Augurs* indelible Character; and as for the *Pontiffs*, they were absolutely independent of the State, and no Way responsible for any of their Actions, no, not even to the Senate. Thus the *Augurs*, shamelessly abusing their Authority, very frequently declared illegal the Election of the greatest Magistrates, under Pretext of some Imperfection in the Ceremonies, or that the Presages thereof were not favorable. Such Numbers of these Instances may be met with in the *Roman History*, that it is wholly needless here to descend to Particulars.

WITH Regard to the Morals of these *Ethnic* Priests, we may very readily comprehend them to have been pretty conformable to these of the most Libertine Class of *Epicureans*, as to Temperance, and this from these Words only, *Pontifica Coena*, which in our Idiom, may imply, *A Prelatical Banquet*; and which, at the same Time,

* See *Alex. Gen. Dier. lib. 5. cap. 19.*

† See *Rosin. Antiq. lib. 3. cap. 22.*

justify the good Cheer which our Prelates take such special Care to bestow on themselves.

THE Rites of the *Bona Dea**, or *Good Goddess*, were a Sort of Worship no less grotesque than was the *Divinity* to whom it was offered, or given. This Female Deity had attained to her Celestial Dignity thro' the Means of her Spouse *Faunus*, who finding her, when in one of his tenderest Transports, partly inebriated, or, as we have it, somewhat towards being tipsy, he so heartily disciplined her with Mirtle-Twigs, that she actually died of that Flagellation.

BUT to have a compleater Knowledge of the Sacerdotal Profession among the ancient *Romans*, we need only examine into the most impious Worship which they paid to the Goddess *Cybela*†. Her Priestesses, under the Veil of Devotion, were guilty of Actions so superlatively scandalous, that it was offering to any Person the most outrageous Affront possible to call her a Priestess of that Goddess. Nay, still more; her Priests had it in their Power to inspire that gallant and magnanimous People with the most detestable Sentiments, even so far as to persuade them to offer up Human Sacrifices, and that after the cruelest Manner imaginable, viz. burying them alive||.

AND on this Account it is, that I find it somewhat strange to hear certain *Protestant Ecclesiastics*** urging the Veneration in which the *Romans* of old held their Priests, in order to ex-

* See *Alex. Gen. Dier.* lib. 6. cap. 8.

† See *Pomp. Lat. De Sacerd.* and *Rosin. Antiq.* lib. 3. cap. 27.

|| See *Plutarch*, in *Paulus Æmilius*.

** See a Discourse on the Institution, Dignities and Immunities of the Priesthood.

cite us to have as great a Veneration for them; since we positively know, that their whole System of Religion was nothing else in the World but a Fetch of Policy, successfully made Use of to tame the People, keep them in Awe, and to inspire them, either with Courage, or with Dread, according to Necessities and Occasions: A very evident Reason why the Patricians would needs be vested with a Sacerdotal Character, thereby to keep these Mysteries always concealed from the Common People. Yet, Spite of this Precaution, they could not prevent their penetrating into the Design; insomuch, that whensoever a Plebeian, by any Accident, obtained a considerable Employ, he failed not immediately to get himself in among those of some Sacerdotal Order.

FOR a Conclusion to what I have been advancing, I would have my Readers observe, that those ridiculous, dissolute and barbarous Methods of adoring the Eternal Creator, have, in Effect, induced a Number of Philosophers to condemn the Religion of the Vulgar: Nevertheless it is unjust to charge them with Atheism for their so doing; since it is abundantly more probable, that they conceived a Detestation and Horror to Opinions so very gross, and so incompatible with the Nature and Essence of the True God, thro' their own Sublime Ideas of Him, than because they deny His Existence. This Sentiment, so agreeable to Reason, is that of a learned Doctor of the English Church, whose Works and Personal Merit are a no less Honor to his Country, than to his Order and Function*.

* *Stillingsfleet*, Orig. Sacr.

C H A P. V.

A brief Account of the Bonzis, Talapois, Bramins, and other Oriental Priests.

HAVING, in the above Manner, considered Priesthood, or the Sacerdotal Profession, as it stood among those two potent Nations, the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*, we shall pass on to the Examination of that which yet subsists among the *Hindostanians*, and other Eastern People; in making which Scrutiny, we shall discover whereon is grounded the great Veneration which those have for their Priests.

OF all the Nations which are still plunged in the Darkness of *Paganism*, the *Chineses* are they who have the purest and least ridiculous Sentiments in Matters of Religion. The Followers of *Confucius** have Precepts which contain most excellent Morals, with very sublime Ideas of that Supreme Power which gives Life and Motion to created Beings. They say, "That the BEING
" of all *Beings* is invisible and incomprehensible,
" without Figure or exterior Form, because HE
" is infinite and unlimited. None has ever be-
" held HIM; Time has not comprehended HIM;
" HIS Essence fills all Things and Places, and HE
" is the very Source of all Things. All Power,
" all Wisdom, all Knowledge, and all Truth, are
" in HIM. HE is infinitely good and just. HE
" it is by WHOM every Thing is preserved and
" directed †."

* Properly *Cung-fu-fu*.

† See Father *Trigaut*, in his *Relation of China*; and the Jesuit *Fernandez Navarete*, in his *Historical Treatises of the Empire of China*.

By this Passage, the Reader may see, that the *Chineses* have abundantly juster and far more elevated Ideas of the Deity than had in a Manner all the old *Greeks** and *Romans*: But yet, none of them, but Persons of Knowledge and Distinction, are so clear-sighted, in Religious Affairs, as this comes to; and such, indeed, look on their *Bonzis*, or Priests, no otherwise than as a Crew of Jugling Knaves and Spiritual Mountebanks, who amuse the Commonality with their *Pagoths* and Superstitions, in order to render them less sensible of their Slavish Condition†.

THE principal Point of these *Bonzis* Doctrine is Transmigration, whence they reap as great Profit and Advantage, as do the *Popish* Priests from their Fable of Purgatory: For they make the credulous ignorant Populace believe, that, on their Decease, their Souls shall inhabit the Bodies of such Creatures as they are most averse to, by Way of Punishment for their Crimes; but, at the same Time, they give them to understand, that, by their fervent Prayer and Intercession, they have Power to make the departing Spirit pass into the Body of that Animal to which a Person

* *Lactantius* says, That *Pythagoras* acknowledged One God, a Spirit immaterial, expanded and extended over all Nature, who gives Life and Sensibility to existing Beings. *Plato*, who indisputably always merited the Title of a very wise Man, apparently agrees with *Pythagoras* on this Head, as we may readily gather from Part of his Harangue to the *Athenian* Citizens. "Sirs (said he) God, in whom, according to ancient Testimonies, are contained the Beginning, the Middle and the End of all Things, penetrates every where, &c." *De Leg.* lib. 4. And *Aristotle*, his great Disciple, is likewise of the same Sentiment. He says, "That God is Eternal, and perfectly Good; insomuch, that in Him consists Life, infinite and eternal." *Metaph.* lib. 1. cap. 7.

† See Father *Le Comptes*'s New Memoirs of *China*.

bears the greatest Affection, or is most agreeable to his Liking: And as the *Bonzis*, like the *Roman-Catholic* Ecclesiastics, never pray without being well payed for it, we may readily judge that their Profession is exceedingly gainful.

THE Priests of *Japan*, who are also called *Bonzis*, have brought in and established among the Common People Auricular Confession, just like that of the *Papists*, by Means whereof they carry on their Affairs no less swimingly than do their Brethren of *China*: But the Expedient which they have found out to gratify their Leachery, is most admirably exquisite. In the City *Meaco*, every New Moon, they with great Solemnity, conduct to their Grand Temple there (which is then pompously adorned and gloriously illuminated) one of the most beautiful young Maidens of that Metropolis, under Pretext of offering up her Virginity as a Sacrifice to the Idol *Xaca**, or rather *Shaca*. The Lamps and Tapers are all immediately extinguished, the Victim remaining quite alone with that monstrous Idol in the Sanctuary: When, in a very few Moments, the Virgin feels herself embraced and lovingly caressed. But, far from making Resistance, the Damsel, with all possible Eagerness, returns those amorous Indearments, extraordinary as they are, imagining that the kind Divinity is all the while obligingly taking his Diversion with her. Having undergone many Repetitions of such Caresses, the Priests again light up the Lamps, and congratulate her on the Happiness she has been injoying; which done, they lead her out of the Temple,

* See *Herbert's Travels into Persia and East-India*, Book 3.

presenting her to the expecting Multitude, by whom she is revered as a Saintess, and by them attended to her Home with loud and joyous Acclamations.

THE *Talapoïs* of *Arecan*, *Siam*, *Pegu*, *Loos* and *Camboya*, who administer to the Worship of the Idol *Summona-Codom*, are, according to all Appearances, the very best of all the Orders of *Pagan* Priests existing. In Reality, they are no very great Enemies to Ambition and Avarice, and therein indeed, and in that alone, they resemble all their Brother-Priests, who, every where, and in all Ages, have highly distinguished themselves from all other Sets of Men, by a glaring Proficiency in those two excellent Virtues. However, these *Talapoïs* have never yet offered to intermeddle in any State-Matters; nor to direct the Consciences of others; nor to possess themselves of Peoples Goods by Pious Frauds: But they indeed aspire to a very great Share of Sanctity, and by Virtue thereof they enjoy many signal Privileges and Immunities, which are granted them by their respective Sovereigns: Tho', at the same Time, those Potentates cause their Steps to be narrowly observed, and suffer only a certain moderate Number of them to be in their several Dominions, lest the drossish Life they lead, might induce too many of their Subjects to enter into that Order.

To this Effect, it is a standing Maxim, rigorously observed, that their *Talapoïs* must be perfectly well versed in the *Balian* Language, wherein are written all their Religious Mysteries; and

* See *La Loubere*, tom. 1. p. 397. the *Holland* Edition.

therefore

therefore they pass a very strict Examination: Such as are found deficient in that Respect, are excluded, and obliged, by Way of Punishment, to beg their Subsistence from Door to Door; but they may not beg two Days successively at the same House.

It is surprising what a very learned Man, one of the most judicious and intelligent Travellers of our Time, has advanced, *viz.* That the *Siameses* (whose Religion is one and the same with that of all the above-named Nations) are absolutely ignorant of the Existence of a God. These are his Words†. “ *Aristotle* did acknowledge a *Primum Mobile*, “ that is to say, a Powerful BEING, whereby “ Nature is directed, and ranged in due Order. “ — But those of *Siam* have not any such Idea “ at all, very far from owning a Creator: And “ therefore I believe we may rest assured, that the “ *Siameses* do not entertain the least Notion of any “ DEITY.

THE famous Idol *Biruma**, or *Brama*, taken by the Oriental *Indians* for the sole Creator of the Universe, has given its Name to the *Brachmans*, or *Bramins*, who are the Sacerdotes of *East-India*, and the noblest Order of all others. These *Bramins* preach to the People in a Manner mystical and obscure; they do strange unaccountable Penances, and pretend that they are frequently in Ecstasies, and to have Revelations; all which acquires them very great Credit and Authority. But notwithstanding their seeming Sanctity, they have a large Stock of Spiritual Pride and Arrogance, and conceal from the Peoples Knowledge

† See La Loubere, Tom. &c. &c. &c.

* Properly *Hindous*.

all their most essential Truths contained in their *Vedam* (which is a Collection of the *Bramins* ancient sacred Books) because they deem all those who are not of their own Order, as Men proper to be trusted with only the Exterior of Religion, wrapped up in Fables no less extravagant than those of the *Pagans* in old *Greece*.

THE Worship of Animals, and particularly of the Bull and Cow, is so firmly established amidst these *Eastern-Indians* *, also that of the *Metempsychosis*, or Transmigration of Souls, already mentioned, are of *Egyptian* Original. The *Bramins* are Keepers of their sacred Books; they are Chiefs of those Nations, and the sole Sacrificers of the People, in the Front of all whose Duties stands that of contributing largely towards their Maintenance; from which Obligation even the Sovereigns are not exempted.

THE *Indians* have not any Way retrenched their ancient Abstinence, grounded as well on their Dogma of the *Metempsychosis*, as on other various Superstitions. This Error of a Transmigration of Souls, which hinders them from killing or feeding on any Creatures whatever, extends yet abundantly farther in many other Respects. They attribute to irrational Animals a Kind of Religion, and are persuaded that, by their Works, they may attain to eternal Life. One might conjecture, that they founded this Opinion on the Worship which they pay to Cows, and diverse other living Creatures, did not their Idolatry, which is in a Manner universal, comprehend almost all Beings, from the Sun down

* Properly *Hindous*.

to the vilest Reptile, after the Example of the *Egyptians*, who rendered like Honors to the Sun and to the Beetle. These *Indians* have the *Lingam*, which has in it even somewhat more of Infamy, than the *Phallus* of *Egypt* * and ancient *Greece*: They are by the *Bramins* made to adore the false God *Isuren*, under this monstrous and most obscene Figure, which they expose in their Temples, and carry about, in Procession, insulting, in a very horrible Manner, the Modesty of the common People †.

THE Sacerdotal Profession is nothing near being so impious, in the Countries of *Mohammedans*, whose Worship, as I hinted, is exceedingly pure; yet it is not a whit less corrupt: For, according to the Testimony of a very able Critic ||, of the preceding Century, the *Turkish* Priests resemble Juglers, Players at Cups and Balls, who surprise their Spectators with Airs of Holiness, which at the Bottom are no Way the Effects of a real Devotion, and whose Promises and Threats, wherewith they harangue the People, are with no other View than to hold them obedient to their Prince, or to any other Person whom they are disposed to favor.—They teach them that each *Moslem* §, is attended by two Guardian-Angels, *Kerim* and *Kiatib*, of whom the former keeps on his Right Hand, and the other on his Left, to be the Judges of his Ac-

* See *Herodot.* Hist. p. 102 and 108, of *Grenovius's* Edition.

† See *Abra. Roger.*

|| *Fr. Osborne.*

§. So is the true *Arabic* Appellation of a Free Believer, as they stile themselves. *Mussulman* is the *Turkish* Corruption of that Word.

tions, and to recompense or chastise him according to his Merits or Demerits *.

BUT the *Moslems*, notwithstanding the Purity of their Divine Worship, have not failed to imbibe sundry very superstitious, nay even most ridiculous Opinions. —“ For (says my Author†) “ we see in *Egypt* (and consequently in all other “ *Mohammedan* Regions) Pantons, or Monks, “ who frequently run about stark naked, and “ who affect very great Austerities; which worthy Sort of Gentry, are highly honoured and “ venerated, repair to the Grandees Houses or “ Palaces at Meal Times, sit them down close “ by the greatest Personages, without any Manner of Ceremony, eat, drink, rise up and “ depart; all this being look’d on as a Benediction brought upon the Family. These “ Rascals (adds he) are excessively lascivious, “ lusting after Youth of either Sex: Nor is it “ a Fable to assert, that abundance of Women, “ who cannot be pregnated by their Spouses, “ do publicly kiss the *Priapi*, or Genitals, of “ those Vagabonds, with the utmost Respect “ and Devotion; nay and some actually make “ them undertake remedying the Deficiencies of “ their unprolific Husbands.----Formerly one “ of these Hypocrites used to have a large Stone “ fastened to his Uirility, because he was greatly “ incommoded with a *Priapism*, and all Sorts “ of Women would gladly run to kiss his “ Members, hoping by Virtue thereof to become fruitful.—There are (concludes he) San-

* See *Thevenot's Voy. to the Levant.* cap. 30, 31.

† *Idem*, *ibid.* cap. 74.

“ toms of various Sorts; and in short, *Egypt*
 “ alone has of them, more than sufficient to
 “ supply a considerable Number of Gallies with
 “ sturdy Rowers.”

Nota bene. As the sacerdotal Profession, among such of the *American* People as still continue amidst the Darkness of *Heathenism*, is not of any great Consideration, I judged it not to my Purpose to say any Thing of it in this Treatise. But such of my Readers as happen to be desirous of some Information on that Head, need only peruse the 10th *Chap.* of *Lib. V.* of *Balt. Bekker's Monde Enchante*: What he there advances is extracted from the best Authors.

C H A P. VI.

Containing a very short, but curious, History of the Pharisees, and Saducees, among the Jews.

HITHERTO we have been considering the Errors and Superstitions of False Religions; and at present we are actually about to see how greatly detrimental the Sacerdotal Profession could be to a Religion which was really revealed, and how it was able to weaken, and (to speak Scripture Language) could render infacious the Laws of the All-powerful.—All this clearly appears in the Remainder of that *Letter*, whereof I gave Part in my first *Chapter*, and the which, answerable to my Promise, I am going to communicate to my Readers, notwithstanding its Author is vehemently prejudiced against us FREE-THINKERS.

“ THE

“ THE Disputes (says this my Friend) which
 “ in all Times, and in every Religion, have
 “ arisen between those who stickle for Sacerdo-
 “ tal Grandeur, and such as are for making all
 “ Priests pass for a Tribe of Spiritual Quacks,
 “ cannot be better exposed than by comparing
 “ the *Pharisees* Procedure with that of the
 “ *Saducees* *; the former of whom were Bigots,
 “ and the latter Diefts, or, if you please Free-
 “ Thinkers.

“ BUT I am previously to inform you, Sir;
 “ that the Divine Mission by the Prophets was
 “ ended before the Appearance of these Sects,
 “ who making Use of their Reason, according
 “ to the Phrase of those Times, maintained
 “ Opinions utterly opposite. The *Pharisees*
 “ defended the Traditions of the Ancients, and
 “ held them in as much Veneration as they did
 “ the written Law. They affected abundance
 “ of Sanctity in their Deportments, Dress, Words,
 “ and in their whole Exterior. They were ex-
 “ tremely nice, scrupulous and exact in Matters
 “ of the least Importance, or Essentiality; they
 “ washed often; made long Prayers; and looked
 “ on those of their Sect, as GOD’S Elect. In a
 “ Word, their Principles were the very same
 “ with those of the old *Puritans* †; and never-
 “ theless they came very near the primitive
 “ *Episcopalians*, with Regard to their Church-
 “ Ceremonies.

“ CONTRARIWISE, the *Saducees*, of whom
 “ our modern *Free-Thinkers* entertain a very

* See *Cunæus*, *Josephus*, and Dr. *Lewis’s* *Repub. of the Hebrews*.

† So are the *Calvinists* usually styled in *England*.

“ favorable Opinion, professed a good commodious Religion, which did not lay any great Restraint on their Passions. They owned no other Law than the Five Books of *Moses*, rejecting all Tradition, even Things the best grounded on Scripture. Wherefore they denied the Resurrection, and all its Appendices, on Account of its not being mentioned in the *Pentateuch*.

“ THESE Sects, or rather Heresies, did, during a very long Time, trouble the *Jewish* Church. The *Saducees*, spite of their Opinions, attained even highest Sacerdotal Dignities, which occasioned perpetual Animosities, and Religious Disputes, which never ceased, till one of the two Factions, and frequently enough even both of them, were intirely ruined, as was remarked during the last fatal Siege of *Jerusalem*, when even the imminent Peril that Capital of the *Jews* was in, could not so much as put some Stop to the Quarrel, much less extinguish the Rancor that was between them.”

OUR Author has, in reality, shew'd us the Effects of Priesthood; but he has been, I fancy, somewhat partial in the Picture of the *Pharisee* which he has drawn for us: Wherefore I hope he will permit me to add; that it was the *Pharisees* Custom to strut stiffly along the Streets, like *Spanish* Dons, and always walk'd with a slow Pace, and grave Air, that they might the more attract People's Observation: They shut their Eyes on meeting a Woman; and from Time to Time, run their Pates against a Wall, till

till they sometimes trickled down with Blood, to make believe they were in profound Contemplation: They never turned their Heads; but their Eyes rouled about this Way and that, &c., &c. — Were not all these Signs of Holiness, and infallible Tokens of a Free Religion?

C H A P. VII.

Observations on the Sacerdotal Profession among the Papists, alias Roman-Catholics.

WE are at length got down to a better-known Epocha, to Times wherein those Opinions which most concern ourselves were more clear. Let us then examine the Sacerdotal Profession's Progress, since a good Part of Mankind have been under the Gospel Discipline.

IN running over the Books which contain the Principles of those many numerous Assemblies of Men, who do, notwithstanding their Union of Faith in *Jesus Christ*, embrace such different Sentiments, we observe, at the first Glance, that each Sect does, nevertheless, pretend to both the Primitive Belief and the Primitive Practice; and that, rather than acknowledge their several Doctrines to be new, they make their Boasts of having revived the old ones.

IF all have then so much Regard for those primitive Ages of Christianity, how ought they to respect that happy Time, wherein the Church was under the sole Direction of this unerring Guide, whose Life was without Sin, and whose Precepts void of Error? Mean while, what
Proofs

Proofs have we, which can induce us to a Belief, that the Lordly Hierarchy, composed of a Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, &c. is of Divine Institution, and that its Members are the Successors of *Jesus Christ* and of his Apostles? Or, that the Opinions, Rites, Ceremonies, Privileges, &c. of the *Romish-Catholics*, as they stile themselves, have any Conformity with that Creed which *Jesus* taught to his Followers? What rational Man can persuade himself, that those vain, nay most impious Titles of, Most Holy FATHER, GOD's Vicar, and GOD on Earth, can ever rightfully appertain to any real *Christian*, as we know, that the immaculate Author of our Religion rebuked the Man who called him Good Master, saying, *None was Good but the ETERNAL.* *Mat. c. xix. v. 16, 17.*

I AM not ignorant, that, was I to expose, or indeed barely to mention all the Errors of *Papism*, it would require a Volume abundantly larger, than several of such *Tracts* as this could contain: Wherefore I shall, at present, only take in Hand to prove, that the Conduct of the *Romish* Clergy, and the *Papistical* Traditions, were the immediate Causes of the *Roman* Church's Corruption, and of all her so considerable Losses by the Reformation; and, in the succeeding *Chapter*, (which concludes this *Treatise*) I shall make appear, that these very Causes alone may also ruin and subvert, even the *Protestant* Religion.

THE first Thing, wherewith we may reproach the *Papism*, is, that the Members thereof have been continually aiming at, and aspiring to a Grandeur and Authority (both in Spirituals and
Temporals)

Temporals) absolutely repugnant to the Spirit of the Gospel. For *Jesus Christ*, in his Doctrine, declaims not so much against any Vices whatsoever, as he does against Luxury and Pride, because he perceived them sprouting up in the Hearts of his Disciples. Does he not tell them, that *his Kingdom is not of this World*? And, very far from seating *Peter* on the Throne of his Church, as *Papists* pretend, does he not condemn all those Disputes which arose among the Apostles, about which of them should be the First, or Greatest, after his Decease? Was he not obedient to the Magistrates? Nay, did he not even conform himself to the Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Religion? How is it then, that Episcopal Government has introduced itself into the Church? I shall, I know, be answered, that it was *Christ's* Apostles themselves who established Bishops; and that is indisputably true. But the Apostles, in such Establishment, did intend to give Directors to the Faithful, to instruct them in the Faith, and to assist them in their Necessities, as well Spiritual as Temporal. Besides, it behoved those Primitive Bishops to be sober, modest, chaste, charitable and learned Men, without Avarice, void of Ambition; but, above all, they absolutely were not to think of making themselves Tyrants and Persecutors: For it was the Apostles Design to commit their *Christian* Flocks to the Care of tender and faithful Pastors, and not to trust them with devouring Wolves.

It is then with good Reason that I ask,
Whence proceeded that tyrannical Government
G which

which the Bishops, and especially those of *Rome*, have, for so many Centuries of Years, exercised over the *Christians*, since nothing is more evident, than that it was not established either by *Jesus Christ*, or by his Apostles? But it is no very difficult Matter to discover its Source. The Apostles at first confided the Goods, both spiritual and temporal, of the Faithful, to the Management of those Bishops, that they might be theaeof as careful, as a good Father of a Family would be of the Goods of his Children. However, quite the contrary happened: For the Bishops became ambitious in governing the Faithful, and fell in Love with their Goods, by having too much the handling of them*; so that they quite abandoned the Faithful's spiritual Interest, wherewith alone they afterwards were charged, and applied themselves to the amassing of Riches: Then they abused the great Submission and Humility of the Faithful, by usurping over them a very illegal and antichristian Authority†. But it was when the *Roman* Emperors had embraced *Christianity*, that the Bishops Ambition shined out most glaringly. There was then nothing but Disputes about their Authority, their Titles and their Dignities, which they usurped

* It may here be objected to me, that it was the Deacons who administered the Temporalities of the Faithful: But that Objection is not of any Force or Validity. For notwithstanding the Bishops ought not, by their Institution, to have interferred in any Matters, but mere Spirituals, nevertheless, by Abuse, they had the Inspection over the Deacons, and were absolutely their Directors. — See, on this Head, Father *Paul's* Treatise of Benefices.

* See, on this important Subject, what I have advanced in my *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Discourse 4.

upon each other to the utmost Extent of their Power ; and they never failed ingaging the *Christians* in their Differences, which occasioned among them dreadful Disorders, and brought horrible Calamities upon *Christendom* †. At length, the Emperor *Mauritius* imagined to have put a final Stop to their Quarrels, by granting to the Patriarch of *Constantinople*, the vain Title of Universal Bishop ; but this Step served only the more violently to inflame the Fire of Discord among our good Prelates ; For the Bishop of *Rome*, desirous of giving Marks of his Humility, protested against this Novelty, which he termed antichristian and abominable. Finally, he found Means to get the Emperor *Mauritius* massacred, and procured that *Phocas* should be elected in his Stead. The *Constantinopolitan* Prelate detested this Fact ; but he of *Rome* highly approved it, and supported the Election of that murderous Traytor ; who, by Way of Acknowledgment, declared him Head of the Church, and Chief of all Bishops ||.

As a Demonstration of the excellent Use which the *Roman* Bishops have made of this Power, nothing is required but to examine into the Violences, the Rapines, the cruel Wars and Devastations, which they have brought upon the World since their aspiring to Universal Monarchy. It must, however, be owned, that *Christian* Potentates, and their Dependants, have given Room for all those Disorders *, by their ex-

† See *Idem*, Discourse 5.

|| See *Abb. Urspergens*, Chron. ad ann. 604. & *Platina*, in *Bonif.* 3.

* See *Eccles. Pol. Disc.* 6.

cessive Liberalities, either thro' a very miscomprehended Devotion, or else thro' a most infernal Policy: For had the Episcopal Sees been but left such, as they were in the Times of *Linus*, or *Cletus*, Bishops of *Rome*, their Successors would never have been so greedy of filling the Vacancies: And if Princes, instead of enriching and making powerful the Clergy, had constrained them to restore what they had usurped from the Faithful, had Princes done so, I say, they and their People would have avoided and escaped all those numberless Evils and Calamities, which have befallen them, and which had no other Source than the Avarice and Ambition of Priests.

THIS is what *Phil. de Comines* * has excellently well remarked, when speaking of certain Largeesses which King *Lewis XI* made to the Clergy; he says, " This Prince bestowed abundance upon the Church; but that he would have done better had he given it less; for what he so gave away did of Right appertain to the Poor, and ought to be distributed among those who most wanted."

BUT such Reflections had no Room in a Mind so superstitious as was that of this bigoted Monarch. It is really astonishing that Princes should have granted Tithes, with other Advantages, and many Immunities to Priests, to the End, that they might commodiously perform their Sacerdotal Functions, and that they should, nevertheless, have so often refused doing the Duty, and among others that of burying the Dead, ever since the Year of *Christ* 800, without being

* In his Memoirs.

a second Time paid for it, by the Heirs or Friends of the Deceased. And yet this most scandalous Abuse is suffered in diverse *Christian* Countries! One may daily behold, in *Italy*, in *Spain*, and in *Portugal*, where the Clergy enjoy at least one Moiety of the Revenues of those States, dead Bodies lye rotting above the Ground, infecting the Places where they are, and this because neither Priests nor Monks have *Christian* Charity enough to put under Ground a Corpse whereby nothing is to be gained.

WE have known a terrible Instance of the *Romish* Clergy's Avarice, in the Person of Pope *Innocent IV.* This holy Father, finding himself not far from Death, and seeing his Relations and Friends about him, all in very great Affliction, said to them; "Why weep ye, Fools? Do not "I leave ye all rich? What more would ye desire?" * Hereby we may see, that this good Pontif regarded Wealth as Man's *Summum Bonum*, his chief Good, and that consequently it was with him instead of a Divinity.

FINALLY, We may likewise, with very good Reason, reproach the *Popish* Priesthood with their using pious Frauds, therewith to abuse the Simplicity of *Christians*; and that they have corrupted and altered the Gospel, that they might the easier impose their Trumpery on them. For Example: What admirable good Use have they not made of what they call the *Power* of the *Keys*, in order to appropriate to themselves a no small Authority over Princes, Magistrates and

* Quid plangitis, miseri? Nonne vos omnes divitis relinquo?
Quid amplius exigitis? *Mat. Paris.*

People?

People? * What immense Treasures have they not amassed by that Fable of Purgatory, and from their grand Specific of the Mass to avoid its Torments? † And what inconceivable Profits and Advantages have they not drawn from the Inquisition, from Crusades, and from Indulgences? Indeed at length the Cheat became so gross and so very notorious, that *Luther* and *Calvin* could not but cry it down publicly; nay, they shook the very Foundations, and overturned a very considerable Part of that monstrous Edifice of Iniquity, on the Ruins whereof they erected that of the Reformation.

C H A P. VIII.

C O N C L U S I O N.

Being some Remarks on the Priesthood in the Church of England.

I H E R E propose to treat solely of the Sacerdotal Profession in *England*, as practised there since its being reformed from the Abuses and Superstitions of the Church of *Rome*. It is undoubtedly certain, that the Establishment of the *Protestant* Creed in *Great-Britain* is owing to *Arch-Bishop Craumer*: For it is morally sure, that had it not been for that good Prelate, King *Henry VIII* would have vigorously persecuted the *Protestants*, instead of being their Protector, he being a Prince extremely bigoted to the Prin-

* See *Eccles. Pol.* Disc. 9.

† *Idem. ibid.*

ciples which he had imbibed; very obstinate in his Opinions, and withal highly conceited of his own Knowledge and Wisdom. It must likewise be owned, to the great Praise of this worthy Bishop, that his Goodness to and constant Friendship for Lord *Cromwel*, even when in his greatest Adversity, * together with the heroic Resolution wherewith he himself underwent the cruelest Death, very justly entitle him to the beautiful and rare Character of having been a Priest without Artifice.

BUT, spite of the Reformation, diverse Abuses did afresh creep in among the *Protestant* Bishops, very early in the XVIIth Century: For, tho' several Prelates, under the Reign of *James I.*, and even under that of his Son *Charles*, were moderate Men, and humble in their Opinions, nevertheless the Majority of them, being Men of turbulent ambitious Minds, aspired to the same Rights, Prerogatives and Immunities, as had been enjoyed by their Predecessors before the State had wisely set Bounds to the Clergy's exorbitant Power.

THESE were most assuredly the very Views of Arch-bishop *Laud*, when he prosecuted, with such Violence, all who durst contradict him, or presumed to oppose the indiscreet Zeal wherewith he was animated to re-establish certain Church-Ceremonies which had been thrown out by the Reformers: And such again were the Motives of Bishop *Wren's* † ridiculous Proce-

* See *Memorial* of Archb. *Cranmer*, Book II. Chap. I.

† See the Articles exhibited against him in the House of Commons.

ture; for Instance, offering up a formal Thanksgiving to GOD, for a married Man, who had been afraid of a Cow's Horn, from which Danger he had a miraculous Escape, &c. &c.

EVERY one knows, that the Clergy in general during King *Charles II's* Reign, were Men of Learning and Merit : Nevertheless the Sacerdotal Profession still continued holding its old Course. The Government had Reasons for favouring and indulging Ecclesiastics; and those Gentlemen, always extremely grateful to their Benefactors, did every where preach up the Doctrine of Passive Obedience; insomuch that one might have imagined they actually had a Share in the sovereign Authority, so strenuously did they labour to inculcate into People a blind Submission to their Superiors.

Howsoever that might have been, the Clergy's Conduct, under the succeeding Reign, was so conformable to the Principles of the Gospel, that we cannot without signal Injustice, throw any malevolent Reflection on those Priests, who so willingly and so sincerely hazarded their All, and were no small Sufferers in defending their Country's Constitution, and preserving its Liberty.

As for those Prelates, and other Churchmen, &c. * who fancied they might not, in Conscience, side with that Government which was established on the Revolution which happened under King *James II*, I cannot allow them to have *thought justly*; but, at the same Time, we must not deny but that they have *thought freely*; especially when we call to Mind, how many Thou-

* See Hist. of the Desertion, 4to Edit. 1689.

lands of Pounds *Sterling* this *Free-Thinking* of theirs has stood them in yearly.

OF the Priesthood under King *William III's* Reign, I shall only say, with regard to such Prelates, and other Churchmen, as deserted King *James*, to adore the Rising-Sun, I mean to go along with the Torrent of Fortune attending the then Prince of *Orange*, that they all would infallibly have done as much on the opposite Side, could that abdicated Monarch, by any Method, or Accident, have recovered the Throne of his Ancestors.

BUT under her late Majesty Queen *Anne*, the Sacerdotal Profession flourished exceedingly. We all know what a Bellowing the Clergy made during her whole Reign, incessantly roaring out every where, that the Church was in Danger. What Swarms of Books and Pamphlets did they not likewise spread about, with pompous Titles, in Favour of what they Term the *Divine Right* of their *Sacred Order*? But these their Attempts, (which produced great Disturbance and many Disorders) did happily miscarry; however, they proved yet more advantageous to the Clergy, than to the State: For whensoever the Priesthood of that Country, thro' the Superstition, Bigotry, Indolence, or wrong Policy of the Sovereign, shall attain to a Power so extensive as abundance of Priests most passionately Desire, being Strangers to the Knowledge of their real Interests; if ever this should come to pass, I say, without being either Prophet or Astrologer, I prognosticate, that they shall certainly draw down upon their Heads a

second Reformation, which will reduce them to a Condition incomparably worse than their present Situation, wherewith they seem so very ill-satisfied.

MY Discourse drawing now towards a Period, give me leave, my Brethren *Free-Thinkers*, who do in Effect think freely, to make a few Remarks on what I have been advancing, and also upon Religion : For there are People in the World who imagine, that Religion disquiets you horribly, since you are always railing at it so cordially. Formerly indeed it was a very dangerous Matter to attack it so abruptly as you often do : *Hobbes* and *Spinoza* were obliged, as you know, to write with much Caution, in Terms so obscure, that very many People have never been able to comprehend what Designs those Authors could have in composing the *Leviathan*, and *Traëtatus Theologico-Politicus* : And you are not ignorant what unhappy Destiny fell to the Share of *Servetus* and *Vanini*, together with their Writings.

BUT, it is owing wholly to the enterprising *Genii* of this Age, that we have seen Religion besieged openly from every Quarter : Its Mysteries are turned into Ridicule by the ingenious Mr. *Toland* : Its Clergy are become contemptible to many since they have read that smart Piece, *The Independent Whig* * ; which

* This was a single Paper, which came out weekly, like the *Spectator*, *Craftsman* and others. Mr. *Thomas Gordon*, who is its Author, was but in very indifferent Circumstances while he wrote it ; when all on a sudden, a certain Gentleman, who highly admired his Writings, being on his Death-Bed, bequeathed him 12,000 Pounds Sterling. [See Or.g.]

having effectually cleared the Way, and given Assault to religious Out-works, its very Foundations were afterwards violently shaken by the celebrated Performance of Mr. *Collin's* *; and finally, down tumbled the whole Edifice, by means of those inimitable Master-pieces of Mr. *Woolston* †, wherein both the Person and Miracles of our Divine Legislator are handled with so much Freedom, that it actually shocks even those who make Profession of *Thinking freely*, if they have not their Minds quite corrupted.

MEAN while, we may judge of the Merits of these Works, more especially of Mr. *Woolston's*, from the Number and Quality of the Proselytes they have made, *viz.* First, A Multitude of young Students in Law and Physic. Secondly, Almost all the Land and Sea Officers, Soldiers and Mariners. Thirdly, The whole Body of Beaux and Petits Maitres. Fourthly, A vast Number of Persons who find Irreligion to be a most excellent Medicine against Remorse of Conscience. Fifthly, A numerous Band of Wits, who take care to distinguish themselves by a Variety of novel Opinions, in order to pass for First-rate *Free-Thinkers*. Sixthly, Several Scores of the Country-Gentry, who affect mimicking the prime Wits of the Metropolis; with a whole Tribe of smart Cits, who pride themselves in aping Gentlemen. Seventhly and Lastly, Many laborious Pedants, without Judgement; and here and there some discontented Priests or Parsons, because they have not been advanced to

* His *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*.

† His *Six Discourses on the Miracles, &c.*

Ecclesiastical Dignities, or at least been gratified with some other lucrative Promotion. All these People have, I say, purely by the Use of Reason, been convinced of the Goodness of those famous Champions Doctrines, and made sensible of the Strength of their Arguments.

NOT but that the Clergy, on their Side, have made a most vigorous Resistance: For, not to take notice of those who first of all entered the Lists, to make Court to their Superiors, with View of obtaining a fat Benifice, diverse Prelates have likewise set Hand to Pen, and so notably defended certain religious Points, that they evidently demonstrate it not impossible for a Man to be, at one and the same Time, both a Christian and Bishop.

BUT none among them all has so notably distinguished himself as that Right Reverend Parson, Doctor ———, Lord Bishop of ———: For, spite of malicious Calumniators, who paint him out as a Man insufferably proud, arrogant, haughty, ravenous, and no less vindictive than the grand Inquisitor of *Goa*; spite of this Heap of Detraction, I say, he has, on many Occasions, given very sensible Proofs of his ardent Zeal for the Faith; and among others, in setting forth most excellent *Pastoral Letters*, which he charitably caused to be dispersed among those of his Lordship's Diocese, at the moderate Rate of Twelve-pence each; and which have proved far more detrimental to the *Infidels*, that is to say, my Brethren the *Free-Thinkers*, than ever were those many Cart-Loads of Apologies, Vindications, Justifications,

ons,

ons, Demonstrations, &c. which have been hitherto Written, Printed, and Published, in the Defence and Behalf of *Christianity*. I therefore cordially hope, that the extraordinary Merits of this great Prelate will be recompensed with the Arch-bishopric of *Canterbury*, whenever that See happens to become vacant.

BUT, be Matters how they will, my Hopes are much revived since the Appearance of Doctor *Bowman's* fine Sermon, wherein that worthy Gentleman, thro' Excess of Modesty, and Love of Truth, has gloriously decried the whole Clerical Order; insomuch that I flatter myself, we shall speedily gain a complete Victory over our Adversaries, the Opposers of Reason. But, after all, supposing the Wishes of our *Free-Thinkers* accomplished, and *Revelation* kicked quite out of Doors; what should we establish in its Room? For, notwithstanding the Sacerdotal Profession has poisoned many, if not all the Religions on Earth, as we have already observed; yet I do not remember ever to have either read, or heard, that any civilised Nation could subsist without a Priesthood: And besides, I perceive, that the Civil Laws of a Country may indeed make Men honest, as to outward Appearance, thro' Dread of Infamy and Punishment; but they can never cure the Corruption of Peoples Hearts, nor hinder them from entertaining abominable Thoughts, nor prevent their committing all Sorts of Crimes secretly.

FINALLY, not to hold my Readers any longer in suspense, I come to a Conclusion, and say; That, to preserve our Understandings from

from all religious Impositions ; our Goods from being seized on and run away with by Men without Conscience ; and to prevent our Minds from being agitated and disturbed, whenever we think on Death, with horrible Ideas of the Annihilation of our Being, or the Incertainty of its Destiny, we have no better Expedient than that of submitting ourselves, to the Doctrines of the Predominant Religion of these happy UNITED PROVINCES, which is the only one may be termed *Purely Christian* ; since it is maintained in its whole *Purity* by the sage Precautions of our worthy and vigilant MAGISTRATES, who have never suffered its Ministers to deviate from the Evangelical Morals, nor have fomented their Ambition by Church-Dignities and worldly Grandures, which have been the Fountain of Priestcraft, and consequently of all those Vices, Abuses, &c. introduced into Religion, which still subsist among the Priests of every Creed this Day in the Universe.

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